

CIRM Provides \$40 Million to Support Future Stem Cell Scientists

Posted: June 18, 2009

San Diego, Calif., June 18, 2009 – The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the state stem cell agency, renewed funding for training programs at 15 institutions, providing an ongoing source of support for programs that are considered vital for encouraging future stem cell scientists.

CIRM's 29-member Governing Board voted to fund the Research Training Program II grants initially approved at their January meeting. At that time, concerns over California's uncertain financial situation caused the Board to hold funding for those grants until the financial situation was more stable. Starting July 1, the 15 grants worth \$40.6 million will fund graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and clinical fellows working in stem cell research labs. They follow the 16 given out in the first round of CIRM funding in 2006, which are due to expire this year.

Alan Trounson, CIRM president, applauded the Board's decision to move forward with funding these grants. "Our first round of training grants have funded an extremely productive group of young researchers. It's important that we continue supporting these future stem cell scientists who are already making significant contributions to the field," he said. Of the 300 research papers logged by CIRM grantees to-date, more than 200 of those include authors who are funded by CIRM training grants. Each research publication incrementally moves the field closer to effective therapies for patients.

The board also voted to approve funding for one additional Early Translational application that would create disease model mice for use by researchers studying stem cell-based therapies for disease. At the April meeting, the board funded the 15 applications that had been recommended for funding by the Scientific and Medical Research Funding Working Group, but deferred consideration of applications that were recommended for funding only if funds allow. With the additional approval, the 16 Early Translational grants worth \$71.5 million will go to 2 for-profit and 14 not-for-profit institutions. These grants are intended to either lead to a drug candidate for an unmet medical need or address a bottleneck in the development of new therapies.

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The board voted to approve the 2009-2010 budget, which was three percent under the budget proposed for 2008-2009, despite a significant increase in the agency's scientific staffing levels. "As with previous years, this budget is considerably under CIRM's required cap at six percent of research costs, which is already well below the national average for a funding agency," said Robert Klein, chair of the Governing Board. "CIRM operates on a tight budget, putting all resources into finding new cures for disease. In addition to making considerable scientific progress, this emphasis on research spending has already produced jobs and tax revenue for California. In addition, our major facilities program alone will produce \$100 million of new tax revenue by the end of 2010."

The board requested that CIRM staff respond to a report by the Federal Trade Commission addressing an accelerated regulatory pathway for new therapeutics that are biologically similar to a previously approved product. That report argued that a long period of exclusivity, which is called for by a bill put forward by Anna Eshoo (D-CA), is not necessary to encourage innovation. The Board had previously voted in support of the Eshoo bill because the exclusivity is expected to reward innovation and encourage small companies to develop new products. Board members expressed concerns that the FTC report did not take into account the reality of innovation within the field of stem cell research.

Related Media

- Videos explaining stem cell research are available on the CIRM YouTube site.
- Stem cell images are available at the CIRM Flickr site. These are available for use with credit to the scientist listed in the caption.

About CIRM CIRM was established in November, 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. To date, the CIRM governing board has approved 294 research and facility grants totaling more than \$761 million, making CIRM the largest source of funding for human embryonic stem cell

research in the world. For more information, please visit www.cirm.ca.gov.

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